



Outsource IT Asset Management and Boost Productivity and Profitability in the Process



Mechdyne IT Services

Organizations rely on their IT teams to support every employee and every aspect of their operations. But who supports those who support everyone else?

In an era when IT's responsibilities are expanding by the day, one very particular kind of support can relieve IT departments of an enormous burden while saving money, improving productivity, and enhancing the end-user experience company-wide.

Welcome to the world of IT Asset Management – the process of ensuring that an organization's technology assets are properly accounted for, deployed, maintained, upgraded and disposed of at the end of their usable life.

Traditionally, the process by which IT assets are managed has been something of an afterthought for large organizations' overtaxed IT departments. But as the importance and scope of IT technology has grown, an increasing number of enterprises are engaging the services of dedicated IT asset management resources. This article focuses on the two principal types of IT asset management – onsite and remote – and will help you determine whether you need asset management from an external partner, and if so, which type of assistance will best meet your needs.

THE CHALLENGE TO IT DEPARTMENTS

When IT departments lack the bandwidth or infrastructure to keep accurate track of all the technology assets under their purview, inefficiency and waste inevitably permeate the asset life cycle, including equipping new teammates with the requisite hardware, updating needed software, retrieving equipment when employee turnover occurs, and retiring outdated devices.

When you can't manage your inventory, equipment gets lost. New employees start work without the technology tools they need. Repairable equipment – and, often, the data it holds – gets thrown out. Out-of-date equipment creates security vulnerabilities. And, at every stage of the process, money is spent needlessly and productivity can suffer dramatically.

"If you don't know where your assets are, they might as well be lost. For your organization, that's a loss of the capital you need to remain viable in a competitive marketplace," says Brian Nunziato, Director of Business Intelligence and IT Support Services at Mechdyne, a leading provider of IT managed services.

But the losses don't end there. Even if you are able to manage your IT assets with some level of efficiency, are you doing so with resources that could be more productively deployed elsewhere? What's your ROI in using high-priced IT talent to document the whereabouts and working status of an iPad?

REALIZING THE BENEFITS OF ASSET LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT

The more knowledge and control you have over your IT Assets, the more productive your organization will be and the greater return you'll realize from your technology investment.

Let's take a look at what effective asset management looks like and how to realize its benefits with the aid of a partner who can provide ongoing support for the operation and management of IT assets.

Under ideal circumstances, end-users will be promptly and reliably equipped with devices loaded with the software your organization relies on. As equipment ages and technology advances, devices and software will be updated to maintain peak performance. When gear breaks or wears

out, it will be quickly repaired or replaced. And at every stage of the asset life cycle, you'll know the status of what's out in the field, what's in inventory, and what is in the pipeline for purchasing.

Too often, however, organizations lack the infrastructure (people, policies, processes, technology, and/or willpower to accomplish the goal) necessary to manage their IT assets efficiently. In the absence of clear processes and a dedicated staff to carry them out, what should be an orderly sequence of actions becomes disordered and chaotic. Equipment gets lost or improperly appropriated by individuals. Incomplete record keeping results in duplicate orders. Worker productivity plummets in the absence of needed technology. Individuals pay a price in lost productivity and reduced satisfaction, and the larger organization can lose vast amounts of time and money.

Managing IT assets for a large (or even medium-sized) organization is a complex undertaking that requires dedicated resources. "Many organizations that have never prioritized IT asset management find it difficult not only to institute the necessary protocols, but to develop a culture of accountability," says Nunziato. "They benefit from the systemization and resources – not to mention the constant attention – that a capable third-party resource brings to the entire asset life cycle."

Dedicated IT asset managers meet their clients' needs in two principal ways: through onsite asset management and remote asset management. The desirability of one option over the other depends entirely on the particular needs of the organization, which can be influenced by size, structure, geography, the particular nature of their work, and a host of other factors.

OPTION 1: ONSITE ASSET MANAGEMENT

Organizations with a large volume of IT assets are often the best candidates for onsite management, as it can be difficult for a third party to address the scope of their needs from a remote depot. The need for onsite management becomes even greater if the nature of their business is such that employee turnover is especially high or their devices are extensively kitted. For example, a company with monthly turnover of 200 devices – many of them kitted – will benefit from placing an onsite team in the client environment. In such a scenario, Mechdyne will identify a central location and establish an asset depot there.

For the past year, Mechdyne has been working with a large California-based construction firm with centralized IT facilities that allow for the creation of an onsite corporate asset depot.

Prior to engaging Mechdyne, the client was experiencing a 20-23% "lost rate" across the universe of IT assets it deployed. At any given time, IT could only identify 77 to 80% of what was in the environment. Equipment was getting lost. Gear – including a vast amount of peripherals like cables and docking stations – wasn't getting returned. And much of the equipment that did make its way back to IT was either damaged or not properly tracked. Anyone could remove an item from inventory. Moreover, without ticketing and oversight, duplicate assets were being purchased that weren't needed.

Rather than tracking down missing gear and instituting a proper inventory management system, IT just bought more devices. This equated to an annual loss of about \$300,000 – a figure that was growing by the year.

The client realized it had to look outside its own culture. It needed the services of a dedicated team with an established, proven system to follow best practices and bring order out of chaos.

In this organization, the IT manager was aware of the issue, but struggled to bring about change. Part of the problem traced back to the client's organizational structure, which assigned team members a wide variety of duties. Asset technicians, for example, were also responsible for aspects of the service desk, troubleshooting and helping end-users. With their attention divided, even the manager's best-intentioned efforts were bound to fail. Making matters worse was a company culture that took IT assets for granted. There was no cost or ramifications if equipment got lost or stolen, or was returned damaged.

Mechdyne started by organizing the stock area to make it a central repository for IT Assets. Equipment, including gear that had been purchased but never issued, was labeled and logged into the inventory management platform. Using the cloud-based Microsoft Intune endpoint management solution, Mechdyne simplified app and device management across mobile devices, desktop computers and virtual endpoints. Microsoft Intune also automates policy deployment for apps, security, device configuration, compliance, conditional access and more.

"Deploying Intune on every machine sent out to the field enables each device to talk back to the central server and synchronize to our IT service management platform (ITSM), which we designated as 'The Source of Truth' for asset management – our source for trusted information and reports," says Nunziato. "This closed the gap the client had of not knowing where their equipment was. By linking with Active Directory and synchronizing that data with the ITSM, we had progressively greater knowledge about a vast amount of gear serving the needs of over 5,000 employees."

Several months into the solution Mechdyne offered, the client has seen dramatic change on various fronts. Mechdyne's next improvement target is imaging time – the process by which the devices are cleansed of unneeded software and configured with the owner's approved operating system and other programs. Imaging can be a time-consuming task which currently takes the client's IT team up to four hours to configure a single machine. Based on observations of the environment and industry best practices, Mechdyne is recommending leveraging Intune and AutoPilot, allowing for zero-touch deployment of a machine to a user, possibly cutting imaging time by as much as 75%. In addition to allowing Mechdyne to image vastly more machines over a given period, it will slash labor costs and free staff to make progress in a wide range of other areas.

OPTION 2: REMOTE ASSET MANAGEMENT

Smaller enterprises with a narrower array of deployed devices are typically well-suited for remote asset management. But a number of factors can influence the decision to go remote over onsite. For example, in the new world of hybrid workforces, staff is far more widely distributed than ever before. This makes it hard to centralize assets in a corporate facility, where employees can pick up and drop off equipment as needed.

Working with a highly decentralized client in the financial services sector, Mechdyne provides asset management systems from a facility in Naperville, Illinois. Here we host, image, ship and receive devices from a single location vs. a large number of satellite facilities. Beyond the savings realized by onsite asset management, remote facilities can reduce costs in other ways. Our financial services client, for instance, has been freed from the need to allocate space, technical infrastructure, power, staff time and other expenses for an asset management facility.

"Our financial services client is big enough to create a significant asset management workload at particular times – say, when it's time for a cyclical device refresh– but they're not large enough to occupy an asset management workforce at all times. They appreciate the convenience of not

having to scale up and then scale down, only to have to scale up again later,” says Mechdyne Desktop Imaging Technician Israel Rivera.

The client’s IT team also appreciates not having to find space in their office to serve as a device depot. Instead, they take advantage of a remote asset management partner with capacity to handle not only their standard employee onboarding/offboarding volume but are also ready to scale for planned device refreshes. Even storing newly arrived machines in advance of a planned refreshment cycle can impose significant space constraints on an IT department. Mechdyne’s financial services client instead drop-ships equipment to Mechdyne.

“Their procurement team simply places an order and it comes to us,” says Rivera. “We receive the devices, check them in, image the gear as needed, and update the asset tracking system with all serial numbers and other data. The client doesn’t have to handle it first and then redirect it to us.”

Centralized reception and management of assets yields additional benefits when newly arrived machines have some kind of fault. In many cases, Mechdyne will be the first to discover it, and can often rectify issues in its facility rather than shipping the device back to its manufacturer. And when devices do need to go back to their source, Mechdyne’s close vendor relationships often result in speedier service. “Practically every day, clients thank us for being their intermediary with manufacturers,” says Rivera.

Remote asset management can also be a benefit should a client experience a business stoppage such as a power failure or lockdown. “If the client is dealing with other issues and needs to divert staff to deal with them, our work won’t be affected,” explains Nunziato.

REMOTE ASSET MANAGEMENT: A SOLUTION THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE

While the benefits that onsite and remote asset management bring to IT departments are clear, it’s also important to note the positive impact that life cycle management can have on end-users. “We’re able to get gear in users’ hands rapidly. Not only do we speed the process of onboarding new employees or transferring existing ones from one job role to another, IT asset management can significantly speed device replacement and repair,” explains Nunziato. With proper inventory control and repair, refurbishment and configuration resources, everything happens faster and more smoothly.

“Plus, we package our Remote Level 2 IT support team with a fixed amount of hours per month to provide troubleshooting support for end-users running into challenges setting up the new equipment they receive,” says Nunziato. “Or occasionally, a laptop sent into in the field turns out to have a hardware problem that didn’t surface until the user got the machine. Our Level 2 team can get involved by serving as an intermediary with the manufacturer to coordinate the warranty repair process, follow up with the user and technician, and facilitate smooth problem mitigation. This further offsets the need for a client’s IT department to get involved in tickets that might detract from more important projects or business drivers. We call it Day 2 Support.”

HELP WHEN AND WHERE IT’S NEEDED

Most clients contact a third-party asset management service at a point of intense frustration. Thanks to reports from accounting or feedback from end-users, they already identified that a problem exists. Moreover, they’ve already taken action to rectify it. But they haven’t been able to move the needle. An entire organizational culture stands in their way.

Moreover, in their initial attempts to improve asset management, clients often discover that the endeavor is far more complicated than they realized. After all, it begins with reception and device check in. It continues through storage and imaging, then packaging and shipping. And it concludes with post-deployment support and disposal – before beginning all over again.

“IT Departments have enough on their plate without having to manage the intricacies of asset lifecycle management,” says Nunziato. “By relieving these highly trained professionals from having to deal with a process that requires non-stop attention, third-party IT asset management resources, like Mechdyne, enable organizations to function more efficiently and harmoniously. You can measure the savings not only in dollars and employee satisfaction, but in your organization’s ability to compete in an ever-changing technology landscape.”

About Mechdyne IT Services

Our 100% US-based IT professionals offer a full range of IT support services including an ITIL best-practices-driven service desk that enables end-users to get back to work quickly and improve the businesses for which they work. Mechdyne IT Services is a business unit of Mechdyne Corporation, a global technology leader creating distinctive electronic, software, and service solutions that enable discovery.

For more information, please visit [mechdyne.com/it-and-audiovisual-services](https://www.mechdyne.com/it-and-audiovisual-services).